

*Family Week*

an opportunity to discuss urgent and contemporary themes concerning or affecting the family and its members: father, mother, children, grandparents and others. The second week of May would be appropriate to observe such a week for the simple reason that Mother's Day is usually celebrated on the second Sunday of May.

Before elaborating further on the importance, the need, even the absolute necessity, to my mind, of having an act on the family week in our statute books, I should like to make a few general remarks on that type of observance. Hon. members are aware, of course, of the great number of special days or weeks designated by law, regulation or merely decree, by the various levels of government, federal, provincial or local.

Such themes as the prevention of fires, or security on the farm, are familiar to us. The business world, with a view to increasing its profits, names all sorts of days, weeks or even whole months to promote its goods and services. That practice is specially popular with our neighbours to the south who spend thousands if not millions of dollars on advertising and promotional campaigns, in praise of peanuts, orange juice, or athletics and the whole array of consumer goods.

But what strikes me as unfortunate in that type of marketing is the exploitation of people for profit, particularly women, and more specifically mothers. Examples of special commemorations and celebrations abound; most are not very serious but occasionally there is the odd one which is pertinent and commendable. Hon. members will doubtless remember a growing concern all over the world for ecological values and the preservation of the environment early in the seventies. The House of Commons then passed a private bill setting up the week of the environment which we commemorated this year from the 14th to the 21st of October. We have all read or heard the statements made at the time by the Governor General and the Minister of the Environment (Mr. Fraser).

As far as family week is concerned, I must say that few industrialized countries have instituted a family week. At least that is what the research branch of the Parliamentary Library concluded after checking, at my request, with 19 embassies in Canada. Of those 19 countries, only our southern neighbour, the United States, has passed, and only recently, legislation to that effect. In the United States, the President proclaims the week starting on the third Sunday in November national family week, pursuant to a joint resolution of the Congress proclaimed August 15 of the same year. The American family week coincides with the traditional Thanksgiving holiday which has a much deeper meaning than our own Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving in the U.S. is usually an opportunity for family reunions.

We are not trying to copy the Americans by introducing Bill C-216, but rather to stress the great importance of the Canadian family and the pursuit of its welfare, which is of great concern to us all. We are all aware that the United Nations have proclaimed 1979 as the International Year of the Child,

to follow International Women's Year in 1975. These themes have made us reflect on the status of both women and children in a family unit and in other social and institutional environments in our society.

While Bill C-216 may seem at first glance to concern only legally constituted families, it is certainly not designed to overlook certain social situations which could obviously not legally be considered as normal even though the tendency is to normalize them or give them at least an appearance of respectability. If the family is by definition a natural social concept, celibacy remains a social reality which should be appreciated and respected on the same level as the family unit. This bill does not diminish or aim at diminishing the respect owed to those who have chosen celibacy as a way of life.

Even though Jean-Jacques Rousseau might have said that "man is not made for celibacy" or Honoré de Balzac might have stated that "the family will always be the basis of society", more than any other, our modern society is facing a very different social reality than previous generations. It is in the context of this new social realism that I introduce this bill. The family will always be at the heart of this type of debate.

A few provincial jurisdictions in Canada have already proclaimed family weeks or days. However, neither Newfoundland, nor Nova Scotia, nor New Brunswick, nor Prince Edward Island, nor Quebec have set aside special time to celebrate the family unit. It is interesting to note that for the last three or four years, the Ontario provincial secretary for social development has proclaimed May officially as "Family Unity Month" within a framework of specific activities and themes. Manitoba, which was pressured into proclaiming a family week in 1978, has to this date received no request to this effect this year. Saskatchewan and Alberta do not have a family week either, while in British Columbia, 1979 was proclaimed the Year of the Child and the Family by the lieutenant-governor in council.

I would like to come back to Ontario for a minute. In June, this province published in both official languages, I am happy to note, an excellent paper on the role of the family as a basic social institution. In short, this paper states that the family is not about to disappear as a social entity; in fact, contrary to the breakdown of family life predicted by many social prophets and evolutionists, the family is here to stay and develop in spite of insidious attacks against its integrity.

Some indomitable champions of constitutional issues may argue that it is up to the provinces to decide whether or not to launch a special family week. I shall not question their arguments, but my experience and the list I have just enumerated show a lack of interest on the part of most provinces for such a proposal. I am not implying at all that the provinces do not care for the welfare of the Canadian families under their jurisdiction. For instance, in Quebec various successive governments have implemented excellent programs to meet all possible family situations. I suggest that Quebec is very progressive